among others) that stems from modern religious fanaticism. In late 1994, the Vatican joined Muslim fundamentalists in opposing women’s reproductive rights in a joint statement presented at the UN Population and Development Conference in Cairo. The Islamic religious revival has been a tremendous set-back for many Islamic women throughout the world, who, after a limited period of liberation, have been required to return to wearing the veil.

On page 509 [I wrote]: Jonathan Swift’s (1905/1706) memorable words, “We have just enough religion to make us hate, and not enough to love one another” apply today as formerly. On page 511, I carefully differentiate Islam from Islamism (the fanatical branch).

**Katherine van Wormer, PhD**

**Cedar Falls, IA**

**Does Social Work Oppress Evangelical Christians?**

It is offensive that David R. Hodge, in his article “Does Social Work Oppress Evangelical Christians?” (October 2002) starts his article with a quote from Martin Luther King. In the 1970s, after Dr. King’s death, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Mormons, finally stopped preaching that African Americans were inferior to white people. The Mormon ideology mandated the inferiority was carried both in this life and the next due to the sin of Noah. At about this same time many other Christian Evangelical churches opened their exclusive white-only churches to people of color. Mr. Hodge states that, “For a century and a half, segregated restaurants, hotels, schools, and buses existed without being acknowledged as a problem.” He must mean it wasn’t a problem for those doing the segregating.

In my 34 years as a street level, front line social worker in New York City, I’m not aware of any organized oppression of orthodox religious conservative fundamentalists of any stripe, or a “new class” ideology. In fact, two New York City religious universities have respected schools of social work. However, in my professional experience I’m aware of the extreme damage the Orthodox religious zealots of every stripe can cause by casting out and damning to hell their fellow believers. Given the very nature of what we do, social work has to be inclusive. Unlike the exclusive holier than thou, hurtful ideologies of Evangelicals and other religious zealots of all stripes. In their extreme virulence hating sin, they often drive out the sinner rather than offering love. For young children and women wanting self-determination escape is not always possible.

My experience in investigating wife battering and child abuse, indicates the vast majority of the abusers proclaimed a divine right to commit violence against their families. This right is taught by their fundamentalist/orthodox religious beliefs. I have been informed by perpetrators of the most heinous crimes against women and children that the Bible gives men the right of superiority. Incidentally, Orthodox Muslims, Jews, Catholics, and Protestant Evangelicals all use the same old testament verses to justify sexism, slavery, polygamy, infanticide, homophobia, and other offences against common decency.

Social work is, and has always been, a women’s profession, thank you Jesus. In social work we take all comers and always try to do the best we can with limited resources. Nurturing is at the heart of this women’s profession. As far as I know, we exclude no one, not even the religious right fundamentalists who often preach hatred. On the other hand, the holier than thou Christian Evangelical teaching of men’s inalienable superiority over women and their children, is often an impediment to the safety and welfare of women and their offspring.

What good social workers learn early is assessing blame doesn’t solve problems. In fact, blaming usually perpetuates problems. For example, when Christian Evangelical fundamentalist figure heads Pat Robertson, and Jerry Falwell proclaimed on international television that the 9/11 destruction of the World Trade Center by Muslim religious fundamentalist, was God’s punishment on the United States for allowing feminism, homosexuality, abortion, and the ACLU, most people of faith with good hearts were deeply offended. Hateful violence by religious fanatics was perpetrated on innocents, physical violence by the Muslim Evangelicals, and spiritual/emotional violence by Christian Evangelicals Robertson and Falwell.

I have a suggestion. Rather than deconstructing social work to meet the needs and wants of the Evangelicals, it might just be a lot easier for everyone to add Mr. Hodge’s “new class” ideology to his “alternative constructions of reality” . . . .

**Peter A. Melillo, CSW-R, ACSW**

**Jackson Heights, NY**